

EUROPEAN JEWRY IN THE DARK AGES : A REVISED PICTURE

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THE conventional picture of Western European Jewry in the Dark Ages — at least that is from the time of its revival in the second half of the eighth century — depicts this as almost a halcyon period in the history of the Diaspora. The Jews suffered then from no or few disabilities, they laboured under no economic restrictions, they had relatively little to fear from violence. A revolution took place in their status at the time of the First Crusade, in 1096, when, with the outbreak of the massacres on the Rhineland, the Age of Martyrdom began. Thereafter, grim accusations such as that of ritual murder began to be raised, with terrible consequences; while the Third (1178-9) and Fourth (1215-6) Lateran Councils put into force an elaborate anti-Jewish code, thus setting the seal on Jewish suffering.

In the course of recent reading, I have been impressed by the number of reservations that must be made before accepting this symmetrical generalisation, and it seems to me that the story must be radically restated. It will be better to deal with various aspects one by one.

I. — EASTERTIDE ABUSES

There seems to have been a very ancient tradition throughout Christian Europe that at Eastertide the Jews were to be subjected to elaborate maltreatment, in revenge for the suffering of Jesus. From the period of the third Council of

Orleans (538) it had been forbidden for them to intermingle with Christians at this solemn season of the Church, and in or about the year 554 Childebert had piously decreed that they were not even to be allowed in the streets between Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday.¹ Indeed, it became usual throughout Europe that any Jew who was found abroad during this sacrosanct period was assaulted with stones, 'because they stoned Jesus'; and presumably as an extension of this the custom arose that the houses of the Jews were similarly stoned by the populace on Good Friday. This curious abuse can be traced in the Middle Ages in Spain, France, Italy, Sicily and the Byzantine Empire, continuing indeed in this part of the world until the nineteenth century.²

It is probable that a practise so wide-spread goes far back into antiquity. At Béziers, in fact, the custom of assailing the Jewish houses with missiles, after an inflammatory address by the Bishop himself, was *abolished* in 1161 by the Viscount in consideration of a heavy annual payment, which was henceforth obligatory on the community.³ We thus find the abuse *ending*, not *beginning*, in the epoch of the Crusades. It was in fact spoken of at this time as though it went back to time immemorial, and presumably the same was the case elsewhere also.

We thus seem to be confronted with an abusive practise spread throughout Europe in the Dark Ages, perhaps deriving from a usage which became established at the period of the triumph of Christianity : for it is obvious that identical folk-habits in widely-separated areas are more likely to stem from a common ancestry than to spread by mere imitation. This would logically seem to be the case especially when the practise was familiar also in the Byzantine Empire, which in the middle ages was cut off from Western Europe by such marked differences of culture, language, and religious tradition.

An allied abuse, of which we know specifically only in Toulouse but probably was also fairly wide-spread (perhaps in a less extreme form) was to give a violent blow at Eastertide to one of the leaders of the Jewish community, supposedly in revenge for having betrayed the city to the Saracens. This too was certainly a very ancient practise. In 850, the community had vainly petitioned Charles the Bald to prohibit it; apparently, an attempt was made in the tenth century by Hisdai ibn Shaprut, physician-adviser to Abd-er-Rahman III., to secure its abolition; there was a fatal outcome in 1018; and it was commuted only in the twelfth century.⁴ Thus we find once more that the 'age of reaction' swept away a long-standing abuse. From 1120 onwards, the normal Papal edict of protection for the Jews (*Constitutio pro Judeis*) specifically forbade Christians to 'disturb the Jews in the celebration of their feasts, by sticks and stones';⁵ and in view of the frequent coincidence of Easter and Passover, it seems not unlikely that outrages of this type were in mind.

Closely associated with the intolerant Eastertide abuses was the more light-hearted, though no less galling, maltreatment at Carnival-time. In Rome, at this season of the year,

Jews were used as mounts in the mock tournaments which took place among the populace in the Circo Agonale, and the soldiers on the Monte Testaccio, before Lent; and the utmost brutality was practised.⁶ Something of the same sort apparently took place in Sicily.⁷ In 1312, the Roman community managed to secure the commutation of the old-standing obligation that had so long been incumbent upon them by an annual payment, which continued to be levied from them long afterwards. Once again, here we have an abuse which was stemmed in the Middle Ages, but was obviously practised without restriction before that.

The compulsion exerted on the Jews to participate in such horseplay, and act as buffoons, was not perhaps confined to this. We find it in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, where it may have been inherited like much else from Byzantine days.⁸ It seems possible that the compulsory participation of the Jewish community in the 'comedies' presented at the Court of Mantua in the Renaissance period reflects this tradition rather than that of proficiency in Purim plays and the incipient drama.

Another abuse which links up with the idea of revenge for the events associated with the Passion was the dice-tax. In Germany, down to the eighteenth century, Jews could be compelled on their travels to give a set of dice on demand, to soldiers and frontier-guards, in expiation for the lots cast over the clothing of Jesus. This is first mentioned as an established usage in 1401, when Ruprecht of Bavaria exempted

the Jews of Mainz from the obligation.⁹ It certainly goes back therefore a good deal longer, and perhaps to the Dark Ages, though it is not possible to be dogmatic upon this point.

There is of course one outrage, constantly recurrent, which caused untold horror in Jewish history in the Middle Ages and after, and has a direct connection with the Crucifixion story. The first recorded case of the Ritual Murder Libel in medieval Europe is that associated with the name of 'St.' William of Norwich in 1144, which thereafter became a commonplace : prior to this, we know only of the curious analogous episode reported from Imnestar, in Syria, in 415, by the Church historian Socrates.¹⁰ As it happens, the Norwich allegation is one of the most fully documented of all those of the Middle Ages, being the subject of an exhaustive contemporary monkish treatise, by Thomas of Monmouth.¹¹ In reading this, one can hardly fail to be impressed by the fact that in the eyes of the writer, and of the contemporaries whose actions and speeches he reports, there is nothing in the story that is startling or novel : Jews are acting as it were in the way in which they are expected to act. One cannot help suspecting therefore that there is a long antecedent sequence of allegations of the type, which happen to be unrecorded : no remarkable fact, in view of the sparseness of both Europe and Hebrew records at this time. There is on the other hand a certain amount of corroborative evidence. In the very earliest English official record relating to the Jews (which is incidentally the oldest of all English administrative records), the Pipe Roll of 1130-1131, details are given of the imposition on the Jews

of London of a fine of the enormous amount of £2,000 'for the sick man whom they killed'.¹² No further information is vouchsafed; but an allegation of corporate homicide against a religious community is not very different from an accusation of ritual murder. It thus seems probably that the Norwich case of 1144 is not the *first*, but simply the *first recorded*, instance of a libel that may go back for many generations or centuries longer.

Certainly, accusations of ritual outrage seem to have been common in the eleventh century. In 1020-1, for example, an assault was made on the Jews of Rome, who were accused of having caused an earthquake by their indecent mockery of a crucifix;¹³ in 1062 the community of Aterno (near Pescara) was accused of committing a ritual outrage on an image of Jesus on Good Friday in their synagogue.¹⁴ It was only after the recognition of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215-6 that the charge of desecrating the Host began to be levied, almost systematically, against the Jews, with deplorable and often sanguinary results. But the conception was nothing new : accusations of ritual outrage had been known from a far earlier period.

II. — EXECUTIONS AND EXECUTIONERS

One of the ingenious abuses from which the Jews suffered in the Byzantine Empire was that of being compelled to act as Executioners, especially of capital sentences.¹⁵ The first recorded instance is of 1073, when a Jew 'inexperienced in such matters' was compelled to blind the ex-Emperor Romanos

IV on his deposition.¹⁶ The tradition long continued in places which were formerly under Byzantine rule : one finds references to it for example in Bulgaria in the 13th century, in Serbia in the 14th,¹⁷ in the territories subject to Venice — Euboea, Candia, Coron and Modon — in the 15th and 16th.¹⁸ Moreover, it was taken over even by the Turks, there being an explicit reference to it in Constantinople,¹⁹ and an implicit one in Cyprus,²⁰ after the Moslem conquest. In Corfu, down to a relatively recent date, it was usual to erect the gallows in the Jewish cemetery²¹ — obviously, a reflection of the same practise.

Evidence may be assembled which makes it clear that at one time the abuse prevailed elsewhere also. Obadiah of Bertinoro, at the close of the fifteenth century, speaks of the employment of Jews as executioners in Sicily, and it was one of the degrading obligations from which the Jews of Naples sought exemption in 1536.²² In Rome, in 1354, the Jews were compelled to dispose of the body of Cola di Rienzi; in England, in the reign of King John, to carry out the nefarious work of

¹⁶ Starr, *Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, p. 202, where many further references are given : Mann in *Revue des Études Juives*, lxxxii, 372.

¹⁷ Starr, *ubi supra*; *Cambridge Medieval History*, iv. 548.

¹⁸ Starr in *Proceedings of American Academy of Jewish Research*, XII, 84-86, and in his *Romania* (Paris 1949).

¹⁹ Cf. T. Smith, *Remarks upon the Manners of the Turks*, p. 15 : 'When any criminal has received the sentence of death, they... make the first Jew rich or poor they can light on walk with the rope in his hand, tied about the neck of the other, till they come to the next tree out of town, and there hang him'.

²⁰ In all the Christian accounts of the Turkish conquest of Cyprus in 1570, the story is told that the Jews of the island were responsible for flaying the heroic defender of Famagusta, Marcantonio Bragadin. It is stated that the Jews had a similar responsibility under the Moslems in Morocco as well.

torturing and putting to death the royal enemies.²³ Elsewhere, there are oblique references which suggest the same gruesome background. A 1650 plan of Prague shews the gallows erected in the Jewish cemetery, the executioner's house being added to the area of the burial-place in 1768; in Ancona, the Jews were compelled to assist in the construction of the gallows as late as 1756.²⁴

It seems difficult to escape the conclusion that this abuse, of the compulsory participation of the Jews in carrying out sentences of capital punishment and the like (instituted in the first instance perhaps to emphasise the degradation) obtained universally in Europe at one time, though ultimately restricted to the former Byzantine area. In the Dark Ages, it may well have been of almost universal application.²⁵

From the Jewish Executioners we pass to the Jewish Execution.

In medieval Germany, it was customary that when a Jew

²³ Vogelstein-Rieger, *op. cit.* i. 314 : Chronicle of Mailross, *sub anno* 1216. It is stated similarly that Pedro the Cruel of Castile used Jews to carry out his savage sentences. For the Moslem world, cf. B. Meakin, *The Moorish Empire*, p. 233 : '[Dead criminals'] heads, as well as those of rebels killed in battle, are pickled by the first Jews on whom hands can be laid.' (Note : — In the towns this task falls to the Jewish cobblers, who have also to affix the heads above the city gates.)

²⁴ [H. Volavková], *The Old Jewish Cemetery of Prague*, p. 7 and plate I : *Indice dei documenti conservati nell'archivio dell'università israelitica di Ancona* (1914) p. 14.

²⁵ Cf. the restrictive edict of Theodosius II. of 439 (vol. II, novella iii : 'Persons from these above-mentioned sects, shall never as far as private affairs are concerned carry out judicial sentences nor be wardens of the gaol'), which seems to suggest that the practise dates back to the days of the first Christian emperors and was later temporarily prohibited. There is mention of one Jacob *le iaolier* in Paris in 1296 (*Revue des Études Juives*, i. 63). Since it is hardly likely that the Paris community had a building set aside as prison and a special official to supervise it, he was perhaps a gaoler in the employment of the secular authorities.

had to be executed he was hanged by the feet instead of by the neck, two dogs sometimes being strung up beside him.²⁶ This barbarous method, common throughout Germany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is recorded as early as 1296, and presumably went back somewhat further. The historians speak of it only in Germany, but it is prescribed in a Burgundian code of c. 1270-1360 and an instance is described in Mantua in 1618.²⁷ It might be imagined that cases from areas near the German border were merely imitative. But there is a document from Majorca which places the matter in a different light. Among the concessions for which the community petitioned King Sancho in 1315 was the following :²⁸

Item, that should a Jew be condemned to be hanged, he shall be hanged by the neck; not because the said Jews claim to have the same honour as Christians, but because a man hanged by the feet delays death two or three days, whereas if he is hanged by the neck he dies at once. Thus they ask for this only to lessen the suffering.

The passage is significant. It is from a part of Europe distant from and having no connexion with Germany, so that direct influence or imitation is out of the question : the custom must therefore have been an old-established and (it is to be

presumed) quasi-universal one. Moreover, the Majorcan Jews regarded it as the normal procedure, not daring to ask for its abrogation on principle, but as a special concession and only on humanitarian grounds.

It now becomes clear why in 1449 the bodies of the conversos killed in the racial riots at Toledo were hanged head downwards from the public gallows :²⁹ this was the acme of indignity, intended to emphasise their quality as Jews.

It is of course natural to ask why, if this method of execution was as has been suggested ancient and very widespread, there are so few allusions to it. The answer lies, as it seems to me, precisely in its universality. It was assumed to be the proper and natural Jewish execution, and for that very reason chroniclers did not normally mention it.

III. — SECURITY

It is universally accepted that the onslaught on the Rhineland at the period of the First Crusade began the Age of Martyrdom of European Jewry, at least in the post-Carolingian period (for the Forced Conversions under the Merovingians in France and the Visigoths in Spain cannot of course be left out of account). This confronts us with a curious literary problem. The Hebrew chronicles of the massacres begin the tradition of Jewish historiography in Europe; and they are written in so polished and graphic a style that it is difficult to believe that they did not have any precedent. But, as a matter of fact, there are fragmentary references to anterior persecutions. Even the Carolingians did not show an unbroken record of tolerance, if it is true that in 855 the Emperor Louis II expelled the Jews from North Italy : an example

followed at the beginning of the following century when Rathere, Bishop of Verona, chased them from that city.³⁰ In Rome, after the earthquake shock of 1020-1, a number of Jews were savagely punished, on the suspicion that their impiety had caused the catastrophe :³¹ and about this time the Roman Synagogal poet Solomon 'the Babylonian' (c. 970-1020) commemorated in his verses the contempt with which his people was regarded,³² and Rabbi Meshullam of Lucca had written about an 'upheaval' in his city of residence. A Rabbinical responsum of this period, probably by an Italian or French scholar, speaks of the exile of the Jews from an entire district and the uprooting of their communal institutions.³³

Conditions in France seem to have been worse rather than better, though here too the evidences are sporadic. Anségise, Bishop and Viscount of Sens, is said to have expelled the Jews from that city in 883, though no reason is given.³⁴ Remigius, Archbishop of Lyons at this same period, tells of conversionist sermons delivered by Christian priests in the synagogues, which resulted in a considerable number of baptisms, not all perhaps spontaneous; of the means used to exert pressure on the children in particular; and of the extension of the attempt to Arles, where some had been sent for safety.³⁵ There is a strange but barely comprehensible Hebrew record of a disaster which menaced the community of Limoges in

994.³⁶ Another speaks of a thorough-going persecution throughout France in 1007, when the Jews were menaced with universal expulsion and the community of Rouen sent a deputation to entreat the intervention of the Pope.³⁷ This was succeeded by the expulsion from Limoges in 1010 by the Bishop, thwarted on the previous occasion, of such of the unbelievers as would not accept baptism.³⁸

In the Rhineland, already about the year 937 or 939, Archbishop Friedrich had apparently obtained the Pope's approval for the forcible conversion or expulsion of the Jews in the diocese of Mainz.³⁹ This coincided approximately with the similar happenings under Bishop Rathere at Verona (931-8), both perhaps being influenced by the Forced Conversions in the Byzantine Empire under Romanos I (919-944):⁴⁰ conceivably, this may have been imitated elsewhere in Europe, perhaps on a large scale. It may not be without its significance that much at the same time ('about 932') the Venetian republic, jealous of its Jewish rivals, attempted to close to them the trade-routes across Central Europe by appealing to the Holy Roman Emperor and the Archbishop of Mainz to take action against them, or at least prevent them from touching with their 'stained hands' the cross with which merchandise was sealed — that is, in effect, from participating in foreign trade.⁴¹ If we associate together these sporadic episodes — Venice, Verona, Mainz, Byzantium — we seem to obtain a glimpse of a really wide-spread persecution at this time through-

out Europe, in which religious and economic considerations were interconnected.

Something of the same sort apparently happened at the beginning of the eleventh century, almost synchronising with the persecutions in France, to which reference has been made, which seem to have spread to Germany. In 1012, a priest's untimely conversion to Judaism, coupled with a garbled report that had arrived from Palestine, brought about an outbreak, spread perhaps over a wider area, as the result of which the son of R. Gershom of Mainz, 'the Light of the Exile,' was driven to embrace Christianity :⁴² and Rabbinical legislation was needed to deal with the problem of the many enforced converts at this period.⁴³ In 1066, Bishop Everard of Trier decreed if he did not achieve the expulsion of the Jews from his see.⁴⁴ (Once again, there seems to be a perhaps significant coincidence between the date of this, and of the need for a Papal edict of protection at Narbonne in France in 1063 and at Benevento in Italy in 1065.⁴⁵) The penitential poems of the earliest Rhineland hymnologists, 'Rabbenu Gershom' among them, reflect an atmosphere of suffering and persecution; and the conventional laudation of the illustrious dead of this age in the earliest German Jewish synagogal commemoration-books is that 'they annulled the evil decrees' that were menacing their coreligionists.⁴⁶

IV. — ANTI-JEWISH REGULATIONS

In addition to the irresponsible expressions of popular prejudice, there was much else which received legislative or

semi-legislative sanction. One may take as an example the elaborate, derogatory form of Jewish Oath, attested in most European countries in the Middle Ages, and everywhere using a similar fantastic phraseology.⁴⁷ This, known as far back as the 9th century, obviously went back even further, and may also be a relic of the late Roman Empire, which came to be of universal application.

A less familiar abuse, which however was ultimately abolished, was the withholding of burial. The Charter of English Jewry, probably first issued by Henry I (1100-1135) and confirmed periodically by his successors, laid down the principle that 'when a Jew be dead, let not his body be detained above ground, but let his heir have his money and his debts.'⁴⁸ This suggests that before this it had been the common practise to exert pressure upon the family of a deceased Jew by preventing his burial until blackmail had been paid. The abuse is reflected in the well-known story of the burial of R. Meir of Rothenburg through the exertions of a pious householder, and in a *Responsum* of R. Menahem of Recanati (thirteenth century) who tells how a certain person died and the ruler would not allow him to be buried for many months.⁴⁹ Here once again we have an abuse which was apparently familiar at one time but was restricted even before the great Lateran councils.

In a curious polemical epistle of the thirteenth century, written by Jacob b. Elijah of Valence (Valencia?)⁵⁰ occurs the following somewhat cryptic passage :

Who would believe our report, that our brethren of our own flesh persecute us although we are blameless? Behold and see whether there is any pain as our pain. They perform unwonted things even with the dead (who has heard or seen the like?), taking them from their resting-place and casting them like a carrion from their graves.

This clearly links up with the passage in the *Constitutio pro Judeis* issued periodically by every Pope from the beginning of the twelfth century :

To avoid the depravity and avarice of evil men in this, we decree that no one shall desecrate or improperly treat the cemetery of the Jews, or exhume the bodies buried there with the intention of extorting money.⁵¹

The report of Archbishop Remigius of Lyons at the end of the ninth century, mentioned above, naively tells of propagandist sermons delivered weekly in the Synagogues by Christian priests, which resulted in a number of conversions.⁵² Clearly, the Synagogues would not have been made available willingly for this purpose, and the Jews must have been compelled to afford the opportunity. Here we have the full atmosphere of the Dominican propaganda of the 13th century, of the conversionist sermons in the synagogues formally instituted in Spain in 1242 by royal decree and given direct papal authority by the Bull *Vineam Sorec* of 1279.⁵³ We thus find informally established in the Dark Ages, associated with comparative religious toleration, one of the most baneful institutions of the period of reaction. There seems to be the possibility at least that this is no isolated instance. The wearing of the

⁵¹ This is clearly echoed in the *Privilegium Fredericianum* issued to the Jews of Austria in 1244 (Scherer, *Rechtsverhältnisse der Juden*

Jewish Badge of shame, for example, was formally instituted for the first time by the Lateran Council of 1215-6. But already the Charte d'Allais, of about 1200, had prescribed a differentiation in clothing between Christians and Jews, and the Synodal rules of Odo de Sully (d. 1208), n. 60, contain a puzzling reference to the *rota* — the term subsequently associated with the circular Jewish badge or *rouelle*.⁵⁴ It is obvious that the Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council crystallised what was already a tendency. But the possibility suggests itself that we may go further. The wearing of the Jewish Badge of shame in Christian Europe, and even the actual form which it subsequently adopted in most places, may have been generally prescribed, by folk-usage if not by legislation, long before the ecclesiastical prescription of 1215 which regularised it. It is conceivable even that the Moslem rulers of the tenth century with whom the institution is said to have originated may have borrowed their conception from the Christians, and not *vice versa*. And other institutions which we associate with the thirteenth-century reaction, such as conversionist sermons delivered in the Synagogues, of which we obtain an indistinct glimpse in the Dark Ages, may similarly have been generally established at that time, surviving perhaps from the period of intensive religious pressure which followed the christianisation of the Roman Empire.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

The material assembled above demonstrates the fact that the conventional picture of the Jew of the Dark Ages is over-idealised. He suffered from periodical outbursts of violence and false accusations. Moreover, he was subjected to what may almost be described as an entire code of barbarous discrimination, which expressed itself throughout Europe in the same fashions and regulations — a sort of universally accepted popular code, which transcended language and frontier. This indeed tended in some respects to be modified and restricted rather than otherwise with the advance of the Middle Ages, as life became better regulated. In some cases, evidence from the Dark Ages is absent; but practises which were widely spread in many parts of Christendom in the thirteenth century are more likely to derive from a universally accepted primitive practise than from mere contagion. In some cases, the abuses from which the Jews suffered may be the result of barbaric folk-practises of pre-Christian times, which were now turned against the people who had become the world's scape-goat: for example, the Easter-tide stoning of the Jews, which was given a definite religious justification, certainly goes back to a wide-spread pagan usage.⁵⁶

It will be asked why, if this picture is correct, it left so little impression; and whether we should be justified in reversing our ideas regarding the deterioration of the condition of the Jews as the Middle Ages advanced. The reason why so little impression was left is not difficult to suggest. On the one hand, precisely because these abuses were universal, they were considered a common-place, and for that reason not worth recording. On the other, historiography was in its

infancy, and chronicles both of general, and (to a far greater extent) of Jewish history extremely sparse, dealing, even so, only with events of major importance. We receive an enhanced impression of the sufferings of the Jews from the period of the First Crusade onwards partly because by that time historiography had begun to flourish and the Jewish communities had become articulate. Indeed, there is a strong possibility that important historical records, which could perhaps reverse our impression of European Jewish history in the Dark Ages, have been lost. Moreover, the anti-Jewish practises of the Dark Ages were, as it were, superficial. How a man was treated throughout the year was more important than how he was treated during Easter-tide; how he earns his livelihood is more significant than how he is to be hanged if it ever comes to that.

The essentials of life were not touched by the popular code of the Dark Ages. Nor, presumably, was this carried into effect systematically at any time. The picture of the honoured Jewish merchant who travelled about unmolested throughout the year, but was stoned and buffeted at Easter-tide, may not be logical, but it may nevertheless be true.

Finally, the Lateran Councils of 1178-9 and 1215-6 replaced these unsystematic popular prejudices by a systematic code. Henceforth perhaps the Jews may have been safeguarded from this or that ancient traditional abuse. But the basis of their life was changed.

APPENDIX

Golgotha and the 'Jewish Execution.'

While this article was in the press, I was struck by the curious analogy between the practise referred to in section ii. and one aspect of the story of the Crucifixion. It is now generally held that Golgotha or 'the place of skulls' ('Cavalry') where the Crucifixion took place, was so called because of its use (or former use) as a place of burial. Thus we find in the

first century the Cross erected and capital punishment inflicted by the Romans — presumably, a normal practise — in a [Jewis] cemetery. The instances I have assembled shew the use of the Jewish cemetery as a place of execution in the Byzantine empire and elsewhere in the Middle Ages, with close analogies going back to the Dark Ages. It seems to me that we are justified in suspecting some continuity of tradition. The Roman officials erected the cross in 'the place of skulls' not accidentally, but (like their Byzantine successors, when they set up the gallows in Jewish cemeteries) as an additional mark of contumely. In the first century, and in Palestine, it is unlikely that this would have been directed specifically against the Jews, and once again I suspect a widely-spread folk practise, which was later narrowed down and received a definitely Jewish connotation.

For an unrecorded French parallel see *Revue des Études Juives*, xlvii. 228 : details of the expenses incurred by the Jewish community of Arles in 1440 'pro faciundo patibulum Judeorum'.